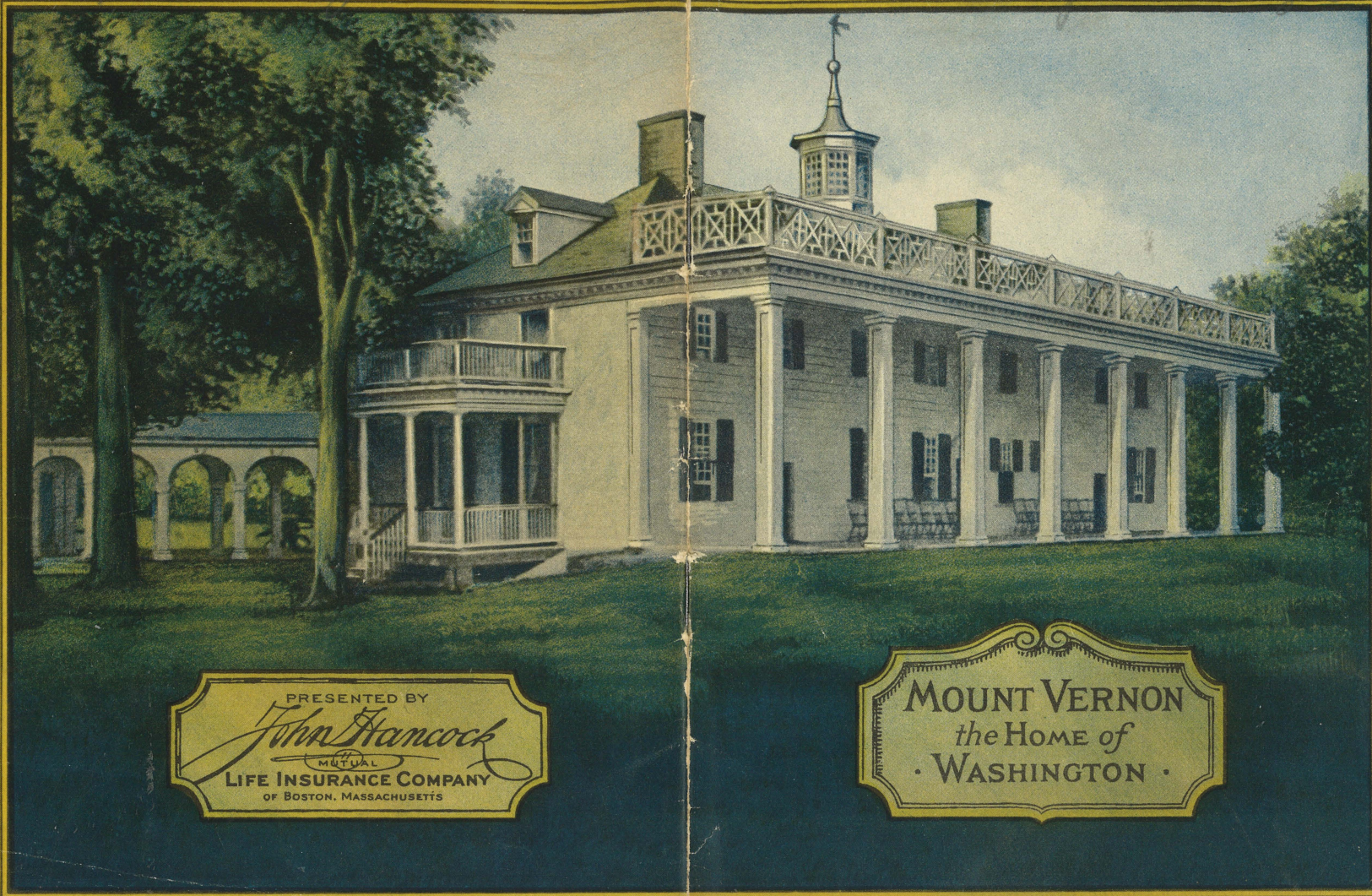


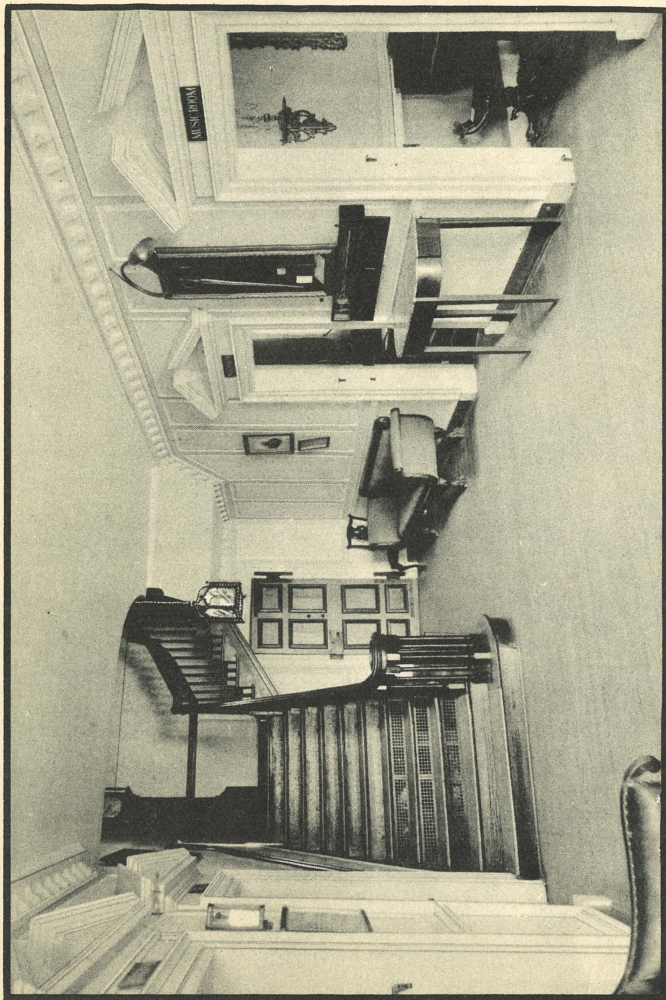
*This belongs to V.B.*

*Virginia Brazil*



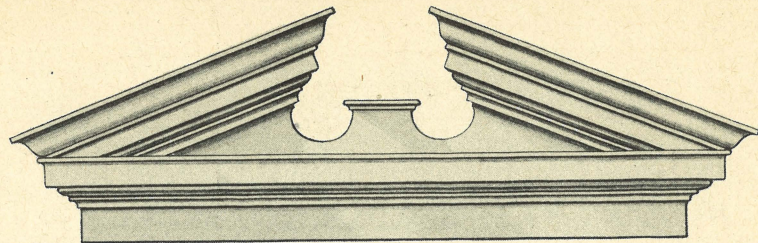
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OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

MOUNT VERNON  
the HOME of  
WASHINGTON



THE CENTRAL HALL

To the right are the music room and parlor; to the left, Mrs. Washington's sitting room and the family dining room. On the wall at the right are General Washington's swords, and opposite is the key to the Bastille, presented to Washington by Lafayette. Suspended from the ceiling is the wrought-iron lantern, a gift to Lawrence Washington from Admiral Vernon.



# • Mount • Vernon •

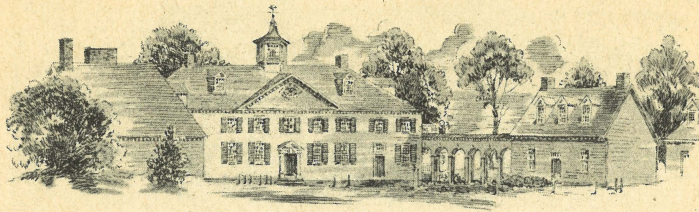
## THE HOME OF WASHINGTON

"Everything, every subject, every corner and step, seems to bring him close . . . . Turn into his garden and look at the walls and walks he planned, the box hedges, the trees, the flower beds, the great order and the great sweetness everywhere . . . You may spend an hour, you may spend a day, wandering, sitting, feeling this gentle power of the place; you may come back another time, it meets you, you cannot dispel it by familiarity."—OWEN WISTER

Published by

*John Hancock*  
MUTUAL  
**LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY**  
OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

in connection with the Two Hundredth Anniversary  
of the birth of George Washington



## • MOUNT VERNON •

### In the Days of Lawrence Washington

THE broad acres of Mount Vernon sloped down to the Potomac, and the same majestic sweep of the river that today charms every visitor to Mount Vernon greeted Lawrence and Anne Washington as they stood at the door of their new home. They were the first occupants of the present house and went there to live in 1743.

The title deed to Mount Vernon dates back to 1674, as the estate was part of a tract of 5,000 acres granted by Lord Culpeper to John Washington and Nicholas Spencer. John Washington was the great-grandfather of George, and was the first Washington to come to Virginia from England.

George Washington first remembered this estate on the Potomac as the Hunting Creek estate, where he lived during four years of his childhood in a house that burned in 1739, whereupon the Washington family moved to the Ferry Farm on the Rappahannock, across from Fredericksburg, Virginia. The old brick barn now standing at Mount Vernon dates back to this period. Augustine Washington deeded this estate to his son, Lawrence, in 1740, confirming the gift in his will.

Lawrence, George Washington's half-brother, was married three years later and went to live at the new home which he called Mount Vernon. Some uncertainty exists as to whether

Lawrence Washington or his father built the house. The corner stone now preserved under glass at Mount Vernon, on which are carved the initials "L. W.", does not entirely identify Lawrence as the builder, since the father, intending the house for his son, might have initialed the stone in this way.

Lawrence Washington named his new home in honor of Admiral Vernon, an English Admiral under whom he had served in the West Indies. Today in the west parlor at Mount Vernon, over the mantel, one may see an old painting, said to represent a part of Admiral Vernon's fleet at Cartagena, which was sent by the Admiral to Lawrence Washington. Also said to be a gift from Admiral Vernon is the wrought-iron lantern now hanging in the entrance hall at Mount Vernon, which from the earliest days hung there near the staircase.

What a world of picturesque and memorable events have been reflected in this ancient lantern, hanging so mutely but so proudly in the hall at Mount Vernon! Among its first memories there must be the early visits of the young half-brother, George Washington, who came frequently to visit Lawrence and Anne Washington. The house of those days was a simple structure of only two stories. There was then no broad portico overlooking the Potomac, no banquet hall on the north side, no library on the south, and no group of outbuildings connected with the main house by the colonnaded arches.

After several visits young George came to make his home at Mount Vernon, and here he embarked on his career as a surveyor. He enjoyed the companionship of his brother and of Lord Fairfax, whose estate, Belvoir, adjoined Mount Vernon. These happy, carefree days for George at Mount Vernon were interrupted by the illness of his brother, who died in July, 1752. Through the death a few months later of Lawrence's small daughter, George Washington at the age of twenty became the owner of Mount Vernon.

## A New Mistress Comes to Mount Vernon

THE next seven years were lonely ones at Mount Vernon. The young master was rarely at home. He was sent by Governor Dinwiddie on two expeditions to the western frontier in the dispute which arose over the settlement of the Ohio Valley. At Mount Vernon in 1755, he was invited by General Braddock to join his expedition to the West as one of his aides. Although the campaign was unfortunate and tragic, young Washington came through with distinction and was placed in command of all the Virginia forces.

A journey to Williamsburg in May, 1758, had an important bearing on the story of Mount Vernon, for it was then that Colonel Washington met Martha Custis and obtained her promise to become his wife. Preparations for the new mistress were immediately commenced at Mount Vernon. From Washington at the frontier came instructions to the caretaker for a complete renovation of the house. Perhaps it was then that Washington began to plan and dream of the Mount Vernon of the future. It does not appear that the house was enlarged at this time, only raised on new foundations and thoroughly rebuilt, both inside and out.

The winter of 1758 brought the successful ending of the campaign in the West. Washington resigned his commission and went to Williamsburg where he was married in January, 1759. The Washingtons spent the rest of the winter at the two homes of Mrs. Washington in and near Williamsburg, and did not go to Mount Vernon until May.

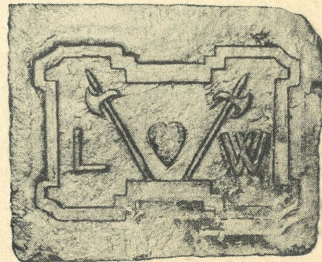
If that old lantern hanging in the hall at Mount Vernon could speak, what might it tell us of that bright May day when Martha Washington first stepped across the threshold into her new home! The freshness of spring was in the air; the birds sang, and the Potomac, far below the white, glistening house, swept serenely on toward the sea. All was expectancy within

the house; every instruction sent by the master had been carried out. Already advance riders with the luggage had brought word that the coach was on the way. At last it came in sight, drawn by four thoroughbreds, and swept majestically through the entrance gateway and up to the door. From it stepped the master and the new mistress of Mount Vernon, and her two children by her former marriage, Martha and John Parke Custis, who were then only four and two years old.

Thus the new household came into being. For the next sixteen years the Washingtons lived uninterruptedly at Mount Vernon. It was the longest continuous period of their residence there, and no doubt the happiest time of Washington's life, these years that were free from public care, before fame had brought its burden of responsibility.

Under Mrs. Washington the house was almost entirely refurnished. A long order, principally for house furnishings, was written by Washington and sent to a London firm. Thereafter, twice a year, these shopping orders, including every variety of article, were sent across the sea. Many of them are still in existence, which, with the diaries and account books kept so methodically by Washington, make the life at Mount Vernon seem very close and real.

The daily life of the Washingtons was simple and orderly. They arose early, and Washington spent several hours before breakfast on his accounts and correspondence. Then he rode out over the estate to inspect and supervise every detail of work. He returned each day, "punctual as the hand of a clock, at a quarter to three," according to his adopted son, in time to dress for dinner which was a mid-afternoon meal.



The original corner stone is preserved among the relics at Mount Vernon.

The management of the house and house servants fell to Mrs. Washington. Gradually the establishment grew, until on either side of the mansion appeared little houses for all kinds of domestic work: the spinning house, the laundry, the dairy, the smokehouse, the tailor's and shoemaker's shop, the carpenter's shop. As usual with old Virginia houses, the kitchen also was in a detached building where today the great fireplace and bake-oven may be seen.

### Mount Vernon Is Enlarged and Developed

**B**Y degrees Washington enlarged his estate until eventually Mount Vernon comprised more than 8,000 acres. He divided it into five farms, each of which was a separate establishment with its own overseer, workers, farm buildings, and stock. A general steward, called the manager, was in charge of them all and was responsible directly to Washington.

Washington was a scientific farmer and delighted in experimenting in combinations of soil, fertilizers, and seeds; he maintained the fertility of the land by crop rotation. Flocks of sheep and cattle branded with the initials "G. W." grazed on the meadows. The waters of the Potomac yielded a plentiful supply of fish. Except for the goods ordered twice a year from London, Mount Vernon produced everything needed by the household, a household that included several hundred men, women, and children.

Washington was ever vigilant in the care and improvement of Mount Vernon. Nothing was neglected or out of repair. "I shall begrudge no reasonable expence that will contribute to the improvement and neatness of my Farms," he told a new overseer; "for nothing pleases me better than to see them in good order, and everything trim, handsome, and thriving about them; nor nothing hurts me more than to find them otherwise." A visitor to the well-kept and beautifully groomed Mount

Vernon of today feels that Washington's wishes have been well carried out.

When the Washingtons dined alone it was an event, so rarely were they without guests. Day after day the diary records the names of those who came to Mount Vernon; frequently Washington frankly admits that he cannot recall the names of some of his guests. But strangers and friends alike were welcomed with true Virginia hospitality.

An important part of Mount Vernon were the horses and dogs, for the fox hunt was a favorite pastime with Washington. He had a stable full of thoroughbreds and rode with great skill. The kennels were down on the western slope leading to the wharf. This wharf, from which Washington shipped much of his farm produce, has after many years of repair been replaced by a cement structure.

Twice a year until 1774 Washington journeyed to Williamsburg to attend the House of Burgesses. In 1773 he traveled to New York by coach to place his stepson, Jack Custis, in King's College. In many ways Washington showed his devotion to his wife's children. Patsy Custis, as her stepfather affectionately called her, was an invalid all of her life at Mount Vernon, and died in 1773. The following year Jack Custis was married and established his own home at Abingdon, four miles above Alexandria.

### Mount Vernon During the Revolution

**T**HE family circle was to be further broken as affairs in the Colonies rapidly approached a crisis. In 1774 Mount Vernon was the scene of frequent conferences among the Colony leaders. On August 30, Patrick Henry and Edmund Pendleton spent the night at Mount Vernon, and the next day, accompanied by George Washington, set out for Philadelphia to attend the First Continental Congress. Toward the end of April of the following year Washington again set out for

Philadelphia to attend the Second Congress. He bade farewell to his household, thinking he would be gone a few weeks at the most, but six years were to pass before Washington saw his beloved Mount Vernon again.

We cannot follow the Commander-in-Chief through those war-weary years, years when he longed for the comfort and peace of Mount Vernon; but knowing his love for his home and his well-ordered life, we can more fully appreciate the personal sacrifice he made for American liberty.

For several years Washington had been busy with plans for the enlargement of his home, and the work which had already been commenced before the outbreak of the war continued, with Washington directing and following it by post.

The house was extended in accordance with Washington's own design, and now attained the beauty of symmetry and line which today is such a delight. The large banquet hall was added at the north side, and to balance it at the south was the new room designed for the General's study, with a private stairway leading to the room above which was his bedroom. A chamber over the banquet hall and the present third story were also added. The curved and colonnaded arches were built on either side, and extending the length of the house overlooking the river, now first appeared the stately portico which is today such a feature of Mount Vernon.

Every winter during the Revolution Mrs. Washington went north to be with the General at his winter headquarters, returning to Mount Vernon with the beginning of the spring campaign.

There came a memorable day in September, 1781, when the General, pressing on ahead of the army on the march to

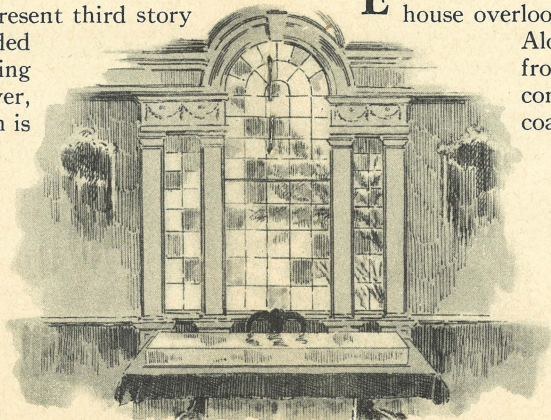
Yorktown, arrived at Mount Vernon for a brief rest. With what eagerness he must have awaited that first glimpse of the changes wrought in his absence! We wonder whether he went first to inspect the new banquet hall or his study at the other end of the house. Perhaps the lantern in the hall remembers.

After three days the General hurried on to join Lafayette at Williamsburg. One month and five days later came the surrender at Yorktown. Washington's great victory was clouded by a personal sorrow in the death of his stepson, Jack Custis, who had contracted camp fever. The General stopped again at Mount Vernon on his way north from Yorktown, this time for a week. But his military responsibility was not over and would not be for many months to come. During his entire absence from home as a result of the Revolution, which covered a period of eight years and eight months, Washington spent only these ten days at Mount Vernon—on his way to and from Yorktown.

### A Christmas Homecoming

**EVERYTHING** was astir and alight in the great white house overlooking the Potomac on Christmas Eve, 1783. Along the road and at the gate, his "people" from the various farms were collected to welcome the General and Mrs. Washington as their coach came in sight. There were great bonfires along the way and everything was gayety and rejoicing. On Christmas Day there was open house at Mount Vernon; relatives and friends came to greet the General and his wife.

With the Washingtons now were the two youngest children of Jack Custis — Eleanor Parke and George Washington Parke Custis—whom the



The beautiful window in the banquet hall, a room designed by General Washington when the house was enlarged during the Revolution.

General had adopted. Once more Mount Vernon was to echo with children's voices and laughter, and today, strolling in the garden one may come upon the little octagonal schoolhouse tucked into the garden wall, where these children learned their first lessons.

### Improvement of the Grounds and Gardens

LIFE at Mount Vernon took on its old even tenor, but now the burden of public responsibilities had descended upon Washington; his public and private correspondence were ever increasing, making necessary an office staff; guests came and went as usual, only in greater numbers. "My house," wrote Washington, "may be compared to a well resorted tavern." The General rode out over his farms each morning, supervising and planning the work. His attention now was directed toward the improvement and development of his grounds and gardens. As usual he made his own plans and drawings.

He laid out the Serpentine Road—as he called it—a driveway enclosing the west lawn known as the Bowling Green which circled by the flower garden up to the great door of the house and back past the kitchen garden to the entrance gate. Many of the original trees planted by Washington or his guests still border this driveway. The grounds at Mount Vernon testify to Washington's great love of trees and shrubs and flowers. From his own forests he frequently brought rare and perfect specimens to be planted in a chosen spot; some trees at Mount Vernon were grown from seeds brought back by the General from battlefields or from places to which he traveled; often his friends planted or sent trees as souvenirs. There is a story that once Lafayette brought him a Kentucky coffee tree from the garden of Thomas Jefferson, and together the two set it out in a sunny spot in the garden.

The flower garden north of the house, laid out by General Washington, with its prim box hedges and uniformly balanced beds, blooms each year with the same charm that delighted Washington's guests. The pink rose named by the General for

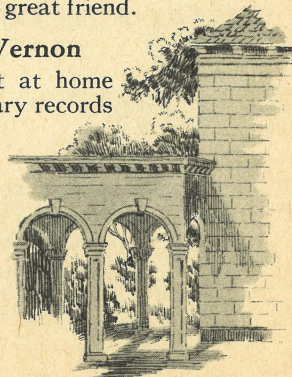
his mother, Mary Washington, and the white rose named for Nellie Custis still blossom. The purple Chinese magnolia planted by Lafayette flowers each spring. The intricate beds of boxwood form the same maze which the General planned. So also in the kitchen garden south of the house the box hedge he planted has developed to unusual proportions, and growing there too are scions of the original fig trees which were Washington's special pride.

In those days, the grass was kept down by grazing sheep or cattle, and to avoid the necessity of ugly fences Washington built the English ha-ha walls—brick terraces which were invisible from the house but held the cattle at a distance. These ha-ha walls have been rebuilt from the original foundations. Likewise has the summer house been restored, which Washington built on the brow of the steep hillside overlooking the river, and the deer park which he enclosed is today stocked with deer.

No guest was welcomed with more real affection and delight than was the Marquis de Lafayette when he made two visits to Mount Vernon in 1784. When he left, Washington rode with him to Annapolis. They never met again. Forty years later when Lafayette returned to America, he went to Mount Vernon to pay homage at the tomb of his great friend.

### Further Separation from Mount Vernon

WASHINGTON'S happy retirement at home ended on May 9, 1787, when his diary records that he "crossed from Mount Vernon to Mr. Digges a little after sunrise." He was on his way to Philadelphia to attend the Constitutional Convention. For a long time Washington had realized that the union of the states was the only means toward national strength. In his study day after day had been written the many letters urging and strengthening the idea of union.



One of the colonnaded arches connecting the main house with one of the smaller houses.

Through the long hot summer Washington presided at the convention which brought our Constitution into being. After an absence of four and a half months, he returned to Mount Vernon, where he was active in helping to bring about its ratification.

On the 14th of April, 1789, an important messenger arrived at Mount Vernon. It was Mr. Charles Thomson, the Secretary of Congress, who came to notify Washington that he had been unanimously elected President of the new Republic. Once more Washington was to give up his happy life at Mount Vernon and answer the call of his Country. His "furlough" from official life, as he called it, had lasted six years.

Two days later, accompanied by Mr. Thomson and Colonel Humphreys, his secretary, Washington set out for New York. A mounted escort of neighbors and friends met him at the West Lodge gate and accompanied him to Alexandria where a farewell dinner was given in his honor.

During the next eight years of his Presidency, Washington journeyed to Mount Vernon fifteen times, but only for brief stays. The President was on one of these short visits to Mount Vernon in the autumn of 1793, when he made a notable journey up to "The Federal City"—as he always modestly called the city of Washington—to assist in the laying of the corner stone of the Capitol of the United States.

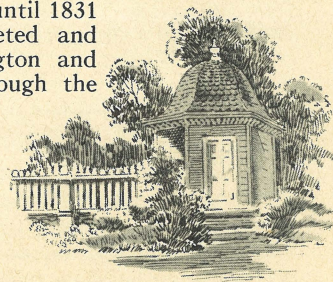
### The Final Homecoming

ON the first of April, 1797, the great coach again rolled up to the gates of Mount Vernon, escorted by mounted troops from Alexandria. The long years of public life were ended and the Washingtons had come home to stay. The joy and relief they both felt to be at Mount Vernon again is expressed in a letter by Mrs. Washington in which she wrote: "The General and I feel like children just released from school or from a

hard taskmaster, and we believe that nothing can tempt us to leave the sacred roof tree again."

Less than three years were left Washington to enjoy the peace of Mount Vernon, to ride out over his farms, and to welcome his guests. The beauty of the interior of the house was greatly enhanced by the addition of furnishings including silver, china, and glass, which the President and Mrs. Washington had collected while in Philadelphia. In the music room, where it stands today, was placed the harpsichord which Washington imported from England for his adopted daughter, Nellie Custis. Her wedding day is quaintly recorded in Washington's diary under date of February 22, 1799—the General's last birthday. He wrote: "Miss Custis was married abt Candle Light to Mr Lawe Lewis." So memories both gay and sad live on at Mount Vernon.

There came a cold day in December, 1799, when the General, taking his accustomed morning ride, was caught out in a storm of sleet and snow. Two days later, in his room above the library, he died with the words "'Tis well" on his lips. The funeral service was simple; from the portico the procession passed down the slope to the tomb. This tomb is now called the "old tomb" and is the one Washington built after his brother Lawrence's death. Believing it to be insecure, Washington just a few weeks before his death had selected a site and drawn plans for a new vault. These plans were carried out by his executors, but it was not until 1831 that the "new tomb" was completed and the remains of General Washington and his wife were placed there. Although the Government made several attempts to have his tomb moved to the National Capital, Washington sleeps today amid the quiet beauty of Mount Vernon, and no one approaches this hallowed spot except with reverence and affection.



Originally a seed house, Washington converted this little octagonal structure in the garden wall into a school house for Mrs. Washington's grandchildren.

## Changes at Mount Vernon

**A**FTER the General's death, Mrs. Washington, following the custom of those days, moved her room, choosing one on the third floor, from the dormer window of which she could see her husband's tomb. In less than three years she too passed to this resting-place, and Mount Vernon came into the possession of Bushrod Washington, a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, and a nephew of General Washington. Through Washington's will he now inherited more than four thousand acres of the estate "together with the Mansion House and all other buildings and improvements thereon." This did not include the furnishings of Mount Vernon which were scattered far and wide through gifts and bequests of Mrs. Washington, the remainder being sold by her executors.

For the next twenty-seven years Mount Vernon was owned by Bushrod Washington, and at his death the estate was further divided and the house and a large tract surrounding passed to his nephew, John Augustine Washington. He died after a little more than two years' ownership, willing it to his wife, Jane Washington, who in 1850 transferred by deed of gift the mansion and about twelve hundred acres of land to her eldest son, John Augustine, the last of the Washingtons to own Mount Vernon.

The upkeep of the estate became a heavy burden, especially since the acreage had been so greatly diminished. Gradually the house fell into neglect and decay. Refusing to sell to speculators, Mr. Washington offered it to the State of Virginia and to the United States Government. Both refused, but to the rescue came the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union, which purchased and today maintains the home of Washington as a national shrine.

## The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union

**F**OR many years it has been the custom for all boats passing up and down the Potomac to toll their bells when passing the tomb of Washington. Among the passengers aboard a

Potomac steamboat one evening in 1853, was Mrs. Robert Cunningham of South Carolina. She heard the tolling of the bell and made her way to the deck, where in the moonlight she could plainly see the outlines of the mansion and the tomb. Her thoughts brooded over the desolation and decay that had fallen upon the home so beloved by Washington. In a letter written to her daughter, Ann Pamela Cunningham, was born an idea which resulted in the organization of the women of the country toward the permanent preservation of Mount Vernon.

Miss Cunningham was an invalid, and the story of her efforts to raise funds to purchase Mount Vernon is one of indomitable will and courage. Her crusade started in 1853 with an appeal to the patriotism of American women. Three years later the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union was incorporated, and a contract made with Mr. Washington for the purchase of the mansion and 202 acres of land immediately surrounding it for \$200,000. The Honorable Edward Everett of Massachusetts contributed more than a third of this amount by writing and lecturing. The final payment was made in December, 1859, and formal possession was given on Washington's birthday in 1860.

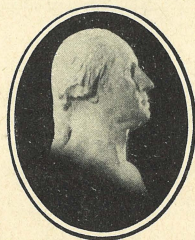
The most essential repairs were made at once, but the work of restoration was interrupted by the Civil War. In those dark days Mount Vernon was the only neutral ground in the country and the men in blue and gray left their arms outside the gates and mingled together here as friends.

To restore Mount Vernon to the condition in which George Washington left it was the aim of the Association now holding the property in trust for the nation. This has been achieved to a remarkable degree, and as far as it has been humanly possible to accomplish, it is today the home in which Washington lived and died. Through careful study and research, the

landscaping of the grounds and gardens is practically as Washington planned it, and the outbuildings, walls, and hedges have been accurately restored. Gradually original furnishings and authentic relics, which were scattered far and near, have been brought back and the interior of the mansion, so beautiful in its simplicity and quiet charm, is arranged as in those days when General and Mrs. Washington lived so happily there.

Every possible precaution is taken to safeguard the buildings against fire. No fire, either for light or heat, is permitted in the mansion. An isolated power plant furnishes heat when necessary. All lighting is by a carefully protected system especially designed and installed under the personal direction of the late Thomas A. Edison.

Year after year a never-ending procession of pilgrims visits Mount Vernon, and for a brief hour or two they come very close to the living Washington. His personality is everywhere,—it is his home, his view, his trees, his gardens, and grounds. No one can visit Mount Vernon without a feeling of gratitude toward the organization which has thus made a living memorial of the home of Washington, where all may go and enjoy its peace and inspiration.



The only bust of George Washington made from life was modeled by Houdon at Mount Vernon in 1785. It has always remained there.



#### A VISTA THROUGH THE PORTICO

No one visits Mount Vernon without carrying away a memory of the magnificent view of the Potomac from the portico. Here in fair weather the Washington household and guests gathered. Here, when the weather prevented General Washington from taking his usual exercise, he paced back and forth.